

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A method in a data processing system for handling instant messages, the method comprising:

responsive to receiving an instant message, determining whether [[a]] an actual picture image of a sender of the instant message is associated with the instant message, wherein the actual picture image of the sender is located in at least one of a local cache on the data processing system and a preexisting database of pictures on a remote data processing system as determined by a user selected preference, and wherein the determining step is automatically performed by an instant messaging process of a receiver of the instant message that determines whether the actual picture image of the sender is in the local cache or the pre-existing database of pictures without user intervention; and

displaying the actual picture image of the sender with the instant message on a display in the data processing system if the actual picture image of the sender is associated with the instant message.

2. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the actual picture image of the sender and the instant message are displayed in a single window.

3. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the user selected preference is local, and wherein the actual picture image of the sender is not received with the instant message but instead was previously received with [[the]] another message previously sent to the data processing system from the sender and stored in the local cache on the data processing system.

4. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the actual picture image of the sender is stored in at least one of a local cache on the data processing system and the preexisting database on [[a]] the remote data processing system, and wherein the preexisting database is maintained separately from a generic icon database and the preexisting database is used to provide pictures of users for a different user identification purpose other than instant messaging.

5. (Currently amended) ~~The method of claim 1~~ A method in a data processing system for handling instant messages, the method comprising:

responsive to receiving an instant message, determining whether an actual picture image of a sender of the instant message is associated with the instant message; and

displaying the actual picture image of the sender with the instant message on a display in the data processing system if the actual picture image of the sender is associated with the instant message, wherein the actual picture image of the sender is embedded by an instant messaging process of the sender into the instant message prior to sending the instant message to the data processing system, and wherein the actual picture image of the sender is a selected picture that is selected from a plurality of different actual picture images of the sender, the selected picture being automatically selected by the instant messaging process without user intervention based upon particular content in the instant message.

6. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1, ~~wherein the determining step is performed by an instant messaging process of a receiver of the message and determines whether the picture is in the pre-existing database of pictures~~ 5, wherein the particular content is an emoticon.

7. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~[[1]]~~ 5 further comprising:
receiving the actual picture image of the sender with the instant message.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently amended) A data processing system for handling instant messages, the data processing system comprising:
a bus system;
a communications unit connected to the bus system;
a memory connected to the bus system, wherein the memory includes a set of instructions; and
a processing unit connected to the bus system, wherein the processing unit executes the set of instructions to determine whether ~~[[a]]~~ an actual picture image of a sender of the instant message is associated with the instant message in response to receiving an instant message, wherein the actual picture image of the sender is located in a preexisting database of pictures, and display the actual picture image of the sender with the instant message on a display in the data processing system if the actual picture image of the sender is associated with the instant message, wherein the actual picture image of the sender is attached to the instant message by a separate server data processing system, while the instant message is in transit from the sender to the data processing system, as determined by an indicator in the instant message.

10. (Currently amended) A data processing system for handling instant messages, the data processing system comprising:

determining means, responsive to receiving an instant message, for determining whether [[a]] an actual picture image of a sender of the instant message is associated with the instant message, wherein the actual picture image of the sender is located in at least one of a local cache on the data processing system and a preexisting database of pictures on a remote data processing system as determined by a user selected preference, and wherein the determining means is an instant messaging process of a receiver of the instant message that automatically determines whether the actual picture image of the sender is in the local cache or the pre-existing database of pictures without user intervention; and

displaying means for displaying the actual picture image of the sender with the instant message on a display in the data processing system if the actual picture image of the sender is associated with the instant message.

11. (Currently amended) The data processing system of claim 10, wherein the actual picture image of the sender and the instant message are displayed in a single window.

12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently amended) The data processing system of claim 10, wherein the actual picture image of the sender is stored in a local cache on the data processing system and is not received with the instant message from the sender.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Currently amended) The data processing system of claim 10, wherein the preexisting database of pictures is ~~stored externally to the data processing system~~ maintained separately from a generic icon database and is used to provide pictures of users for a different user identification purpose other than instant messaging.

16. (Currently amended) A computer program product in a computer readable medium for handling instant messages in a data processing system, the computer program product comprising:

first instructions, responsive to receiving an instant message, for determining whether [[a]] an actual picture image of a sender of the instant message is associated with the instant message, wherein the actual picture image of the sender is located in at least one of a local cache on the data processing system

and a preexisting database of pictures on a remote data processing system as determined by a user selected preference, and wherein the determining is automatically performed by an instant messaging process of a receiver of the instant message that determines whether the actual picture image of the sender is in the local cache or the preexisting database of pictures without user intervention; and

second instructions for displaying the actual picture image of the sender with the instant message on a display in the data processing system if the actual picture image of the sender is associated with the instant message.

17. (Currently amended) The computer program product of claim 16, wherein the actual picture image of the sender and the instant message are displayed in a single window.

17. (Cancelled)

19. (Currently amended) The computer program product of claim 16, wherein the actual picture image of the sender is stored in a local cache on the data processing system and is not received with the instant message from the sender.

20-21. (Cancelled)

22. (Currently amended) The computer program product of claim 16, wherein the actual picture image of the sender in the preexisting database also is used for a different user identification purpose other than instant messaging.

23. (New) A data processing system for sending an instant message, the data processing system comprising:

receiving means for receiving the instant message from a sender co-acting with the data processing system;

selection means for selecting an actual picture image of the sender that is to be sent with the instant message, wherein the actual picture image of the sender is located in a preexisting database of pictures and is automatically selected by the selection means based upon particular content in the instant message; and

sending means for sending the actual picture image of the sender with the instant message.

24. (New) The data processing system of Claim 23, wherein the particular content is an emoticon.